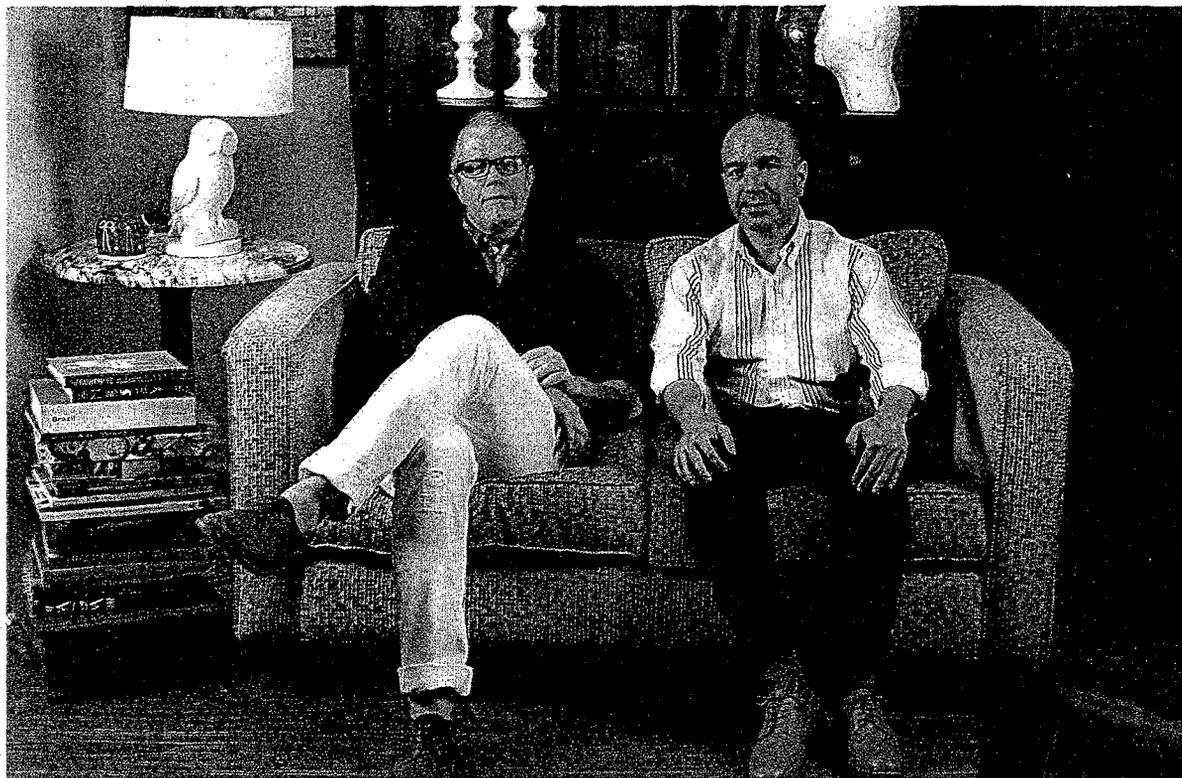


## Up Close



JESSICA KOURKOUNIS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

'They're always funny and brutally honest,' said Joe Zee, creative director of Elle. 'And they know their stuff.'

By CLAUDIA GRIVATZ COPQUIN

**T**HE bloggers behind TomandLorenzo.com have been to countless fashion shows, but one stands out as surreal. It was Oscar de la Renta's pre-fall collection last December, a tough ticket to score. Not only were the pair seated front row, but Anna Wintour was six seats away.

"Lorenzo was near tears," Tom Fitzgerald said.

For Mr. Fitzgerald and Lorenzo Marquez, former proofreaders and translators from Philadelphia, it signaled their arrival, or at least recognition, by the fashion elite.

## Despite New Fame, Still Struck By Stars

Their blog, which offers sharp-tongued and often bitchy commentary on a potpourri of pop culture, is read by some fashion heavyweights. "They're always funny and brutally honest," "And they know their stuff."

Recent barbs have been directed at Nicole Kidman, who is on the current cover of *V* Magazine, photographed topless by Mario Testino. "Stuff like this just confuses the hell out of us," they wrote. "We think about the fact that she's a mature woman with an Academy Award, a baby and a ton of respect both in her industry

and in the world at large. And then it all suddenly feels kind of sad and desperate."

A frequent subject is Michelle Obama. As do other self-appointed style arbiters, they treat her like the second coming of Jackie O. "What a perfect dress for a sit-down interview," they said, after her appearance last month with Jay Leno, wearing a Bibhu Mohapatra dress. "Attagirl, FLO."

That Mr. Fitzgerald (at left above) and Mr. Marquez, both 46, lack professional fashion credentials is of no concern. "I wasn't completely ignorant of fashion," Mr. Fitzgerald said. "What I brought to the table was my film school degree, which taught me how to visually analyze things."

Mr. Fitzgerald writes much of the copy, while Mr. Marquez scours

photo agencies and news releases for celebrity images. The two are not only partners online, but offline as well. They met in 1996 in "the gayest way possible," Mr. Fitzgerald said (at a gym) and have been a couple ever since.

They make an incongruous pair. Mr. Fitzgerald, who has thinning brown hair, is 6-foot-2 and towers over Mr. Marquez, who is 5-foot-8.

They started blogging in 2006, when Mr. Marquez became enthralled with Laura Bennett, a contestant on "Project Runway." "I said: 'This woman is fabulous. We have to talk about her,'" he said. The site was called ProjectRunGay.

Early fans included Nina Garcia, one of the show's judges and now a frequent retweeter of the Tom and Lorenzo posts. "They can sometimes be a little biting, but it's all done in good fun," said Ms. Garcia, the fashion director at Marie Claire.

By 2009, as readership ballooned and they began accepting Google ads, the two closed down their proofreading business to focus full time on the blog, which they renamed TomandLorenzo.com. "A million people start blogs, and one of every million makes it big," Mr. Fitzgerald said. "If you don't mind me saying so, Lorenzo has a tendency to get a little grandiose and I'm always the one saying, 'Honey, you need to have more realistic expectations from the world.'"

The two, who live together in a three-story house in South Philadelphia, commute to New York City once a week to meet with fashion editors, publishers and their book agent. Such was the case the other Wednesday, when they met with Laura Brown, a features and special-projects editor at Harper's Bazaar over breakfast at Café Cluny in the West Village. ("I just wanted to meet them, to be honest," Ms. Brown said.)

After breakfast, they holed up at the Empire Hotel on the Upper West Side, their home away from, where they would crank out 15 posts over the course of that day. Between posts, they interviewed the comedian Joy Behar for Metrosource, a gay magazine, and celebrated Mr. Marquez's birthday at a nearby Indian restaurant before returning to the hotel, where they posted live Twitter messages during the TV show "Dallas." ("What does Sue Ellen do in that curiously empty office with curiously outdated office equipment?" they wrote.)

Of course, the two plan to be in town during New York Fashion Week. "We've attended every Fashion Week since 2007," Mr. Fitzgerald said, before recalling another show, Oscar de la Renta Fall 2012, where they sat in the second row behind Rachel Zoe, the celebrity stylist. She "spun around and said 'Are you Tom and Lorenzo?'" he said. "We almost fainted. It was a big 'OMG, this is not happening!' moment. She said she loves us."